

# Ep #17: Get Ready With Me

Can't  
wait  
to hear  
you  
with  
Michèle Voillequé

**Full Episode Transcript**

# Ep #17: Get Ready With Me

Your voice is unique to you. It grows as you grow. It changes as you change. If you're curious about the relationship between your voice and your body, your heart and your mind, welcome. My name is Michèle Voillequé and I can't wait to hear you.

One of the things I have struggled with throughout my life is sitting calmly with myself while I warm up my voice. There's a part of me that wants the warmup to be over, wants the warmup to be unnecessary, and gets really frustrated when things are not immediately beautiful.

And it's taken a lot of practice, a lot of experimentation, a lot of attempts and failures to figure out how to be with myself while I'm warming up so that I can warm up effectively. Not just effectively, but also more time efficiently because you probably know, the more you resist doing a thing, the longer it takes.

And, you know, when I add up all of the hours I've thought about the basket of laundry that I haven't folded... This is a story from many, many years ago, when my kids were small and there was a ton of laundry all of the time, and it would just sort of accumulate and weigh on my mind.

One day I decided that I was going to time how long it took me to fold a basket of laundry. And the answer was nine minutes.

And when I realized it took me nine minutes to fold the basket, and I had spent way more than that procrastinating folding the basket of laundry. Not just procrastinating, but like having feelings about the laundry – it really changed how I approached folding laundry.

And not too long after that, the kids started doing their own laundry. So the number of baskets of laundry I needed to fold, it got greatly reduced.

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But that that was a useful strategy for me to figure out how long is the thing I'm procrastinating actually gonna take?

And for me a good warm up is somewhere between 9 and 12 minutes. I can get myself into a state where I feel like okay I think now I can sing in public and not embarrass myself.

Does that seem like a lot of time? Does it seem like not nearly enough time to you? For everybody, it's going to be different. And honestly, for me, every day is going to be different. And it depends, too, on what I'm singing, or what I'm getting ready, um, to present, if it's speaking.

Because this process of warming up is so individual, I recorded an earlier podcast called, “Why YouTube Warm Ups Might Not Work for You,” specifically to make the point that just because it works for somebody on YouTube doesn't mean that it's a good exercise for you or that it's going to be helpful in your journey.

That's not to say that stuff on YouTube isn't useful. It can be. It's just not a guarantee.

I've started teaching a group class called “Get Ready With Me!” where we, as a group, walk through, not just some warm ups. It's not me giving you a routine to do. It's me showing you some exercises to try, walking you through what it is you're trying to accomplish when you're warming up and being available to troubleshoot, answer questions, invent new exercises, be with you through this process of learning how to be with yourself as you warm yourself up.

So if you're listening to this podcast when it's released in mid-January, there's another round of “Get Ready With Me!” starting in a couple of weeks and I hope if this is a struggle that you have, or this is something that you're interested in, um, that you'll join me.

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And there'll be links in the show notes to my website where you can find more information and register.

My last episode called “Help! I've Got an Audition in Two Weeks!” is about how do you learn a song when you don't have a lot of time?

How do you learn it so that you can present it well when you haven't had the opportunity to sing it over and over and over and over again in all kinds of situations, in lots of different rooms so that, you know, you feel like it's, it's just something you pull out of your back pocket and it's just there for you, right?

It's really not possible to get to that state with a piece of music in two weeks. You can get to good, but you can't get to “roll-out-of-bed-and-sing-it-perfectly” comfort.

As you can imagine, because there are whole books probably written about audition preparation, that episode is not exhaustive of all the things you might consider, all the tactics you might try. So there's a lot left hanging that's kind of been gnawing at me since I recorded it.

And one of the things that I feel is like related to how we warm ourselves up, how we build a practice of being with ourselves when we're not perfect and striving to improve, is, what do you do when the audition is in two minutes and your nervous system is just on high alert, when you've got butterflies, your palms are sweaty, you might not be able to see straight?

You're nervous. You're honestly nervous, because you're about to go do the thing in front of people who were gonna judge you. That's, I don't know anybody who, who loves being judged. So it's a, in a high stress situation. And it's not the same level of fear, maybe, or dread when we

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sit down to warm up, but it is a similar kind of thing where, at least for me, there's a part of me that's judging me.

There's a part of me that wants to warm up, get ready to go do a thing, and there's a part of me that is just going to notice every little thing that's wrong and just send me down a rabbit hole of shame and despair, and like, “Why even bother?” And, “Oh my god, you haven't figured that out yet?”

I have a really mean inner critic and I've met enough other people to know that I'm not alone. So if you have a mean inner critic, we're in good company.

And if you don't have a really mean inner critic, I – are you sure? It seems to be a thing that comes with being a person.

So when you're nervous, when you're frustrated, when you're not thinking the most clearly, how do we come back to ourselves? How do we come home to ourselves?

In my framework of how I think about what it takes to sing and speak well, I think we need to feel physically strong, and we need to have neurological calm in our body, and we need to have a grounded sense of being.

I talk about this in a podcast episode called “Your Whole Self is the Instrument.” If you want to go listen to like the overview of it.

What I want to talk about today is the part of being grounded. How do you find a grounded sense of being? How do you build that into your practice of everyday life so that you have something you can return to

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that doesn't involve taking a week off of work and, you know, like special circumstances?

How do we find “grounded” and “calm” easily? More and more easily? Because it's that sense of feeling safe and accepting of ourselves that we need in order to warm up well, in order to prepare ourselves to do the thing, whatever the thing is.

I think this is true even if we're not talking about our voice, if we're just talking about other things in life. But, restricting this to our voice for today...

I think one of the most helpful things you can do is build a practice of connecting with your feet, your feet on the earth. You know, you probably walk around the world a lot. Your feet are connecting with the earth a lot in your daily life. And what I'm suggesting is that you make specific time to become aware of your feet connecting with the earth.

I'm a big walker. I walk, you know, between three and five miles a day. And I have to tell you, I do not pay attention to my feet while I'm doing that, most of the time. I'm on a walk, but really, I couldn't tell you. I'm not aware of every footfall, mostly because I'm thinking about other things.

Part of my walking is, processing emotion, of inventorying my mind. Just what's going on up there? Sometimes, you know, listening to other podcasts. I'm very much in my head when I'm walking, unless it's uphill and I'm carrying groceries and then I become aware of my breath, aware of my lower body because it's working so hard to get me where I need to go.

But I just, from my own experience, I walk a lot and I don't pay attention to my feet.

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So when I'm about to do something that is stressful, or when I'm going to warm up, one of the things I do is bring attention to my feet intentionally. And often I'm in stocking feet when I'm warming up.

Can I feel my feet on the floor? Like, curling my toes up, rolling, you know, moving on the ball of my foot, rolling to the outside of my foot and to the inside of my foot, I'll stretch my toes in all the ways I can.

I'll do something called a toe pull, where you put one foot behind you with the top of your foot on the floor, so you can feel a stretch along the top of your foot and into your ankle, trying to bring awareness to my feet on the earth.

And when I can take time in a regular day to do that, several times, just bringing attention to my feet, it's easier and easier to pay attention to them.

If you have a routine of like maybe you're working at an office desk and, um, your doctor's told you that you need to get more steps in a day, so you've set a timer so that you'll get up from your desk, right? Once an hour or whatever.

Or maybe you're using the pomodoro method in your work where you set a timer for 25 or however many minutes, you work for that amount of time, the timer goes off, you get a five or 10 minute break, and then you go back, working in that kind of way.

If you already have that habit, you can add your feet to it.

So when you're getting up from your desk, just take a minute to notice your feet are on the earth. Your feet are connecting to the floor, and feel that energy at the very bottom of your body.

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When you first start noticing your feet, it might be hard. Like, you're not quite sure what you're looking for. You don't know, am I feeling it or not?

So give yourself something a little challenging to do with your feet, maybe raise yourself up, raise your heels off, off the floor. Just go up on the balls of your feet and then back down maybe three or five times. And hold on to something.

The point, this is, this isn't a balance exercise where you you know, you can use it as a balance exercise for sure, but for the sake of bringing attention to your feet, hold on to something and what you're looking for is just feeling your feet on the ground so that you get in the habit of feeling your feet on the ground.

Because when you are about to go into an audition or about to do anything challenging, you want your feet under you.

You want to feel your feet, the strength of your feet, the strength of your legs on the ground supporting you. And bringing your attention to your feet three to five times a day either with a timer, with an alarm, or connected to a particular activity, you'll get better and better at it.

The class I'm teaching, "Get Ready With Me!" happens on Zoom, and most of us are seated most of the time. So while there's an opportunity to practice feeling into our feet, there's also, the more immediately relevant question of, how do we sit well? How do we feel grounded, relaxed, but also able to take action from a seated position?

So we don't want to be slumping, we don't want to be slouching. We want to find a good, healthy way to sit that feels strong, empowered, and spacious, like there's plenty of room here.



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There's plenty of safety here. There's plenty of acceptance here because you're really not going to get anywhere with warming up if you don't feel safe, accepted. and spacious.

Many of my students have had years-long journeys with their posture, either because they were in a car accident or had repetitive stress injuries from work, or had just talked themselves into an idea of what “sitting well” looked like that actually contorted them into a shape that was really not sustainable.

So many of my students have had to relearn how to hold themselves.

So if you're thinking, “How do I sit well?”

“I have no idea how to sit well,” or

“I try that, I try sitting well, and then, almost immediately I fall out of that posture. I try to have, in air quotes, ‘good posture,’ and I’m never able to sustain it.”

You're not alone, and, this is a process, I guess.

And, and this is why it's good to study with somebody in person, because you can work in real time with somebody who sees your body, how you're holding your body, and can help you make adjustments. Also, often, very fine adjustments create so much more ease.

Most people are way closer than they think they are to a good singing or speaking posture.

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Anyway, the idea with a good seated position is that you are able to feel the center of your power, you're able to feel your seat in your seat, your hips are relaxed, hopefully not painful.

And that your spine rises up out of your pelvis in a way that feels, again, empowered, empowering, strong, capable, healthy, brilliant. You're able to sit in a way that you feel physically and emotionally amazing.

And this is something that we need to practice doing. We often notice that we don't have this posture exactly when we most need this posture, right? And trying to put it on in that moment, trying to find that strength in the moment before the meeting starts or before the interview or whatever, trying to find it then often results in a lot of extra stiffness that isn't helpful and a lot of extra effort that is distracting.

And we end up feeling, although we may be sitting better than quote unquote "normal," we don't actually feel more spacious, safe, empowered, or accepting of ourselves because we're working so hard to be "sitting well."

So again, like with feeling your feet on the earth, bringing attention and energy to your feet regularly throughout the day will make it easier to bring attention and energy to your feet when you most need it. Bringing attention and energy to our sit bones, to how we are seated, will make it easier to find that when we go to warm up, when we're under stress.

So an image that I hope is helpful is as you're seated, if you can take three breaths that fill up the center of your body and help you feel that your pelvic bowl is filled with, you can choose.

Some of my students like the idea of breathing in, filling their pelvic bowl with light, or with air, or just simply feeling the muscular

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expansion that comes in the lower part of your trunk when you take in a good breath.

I have a video, “Yes, You Can Sound Better,” that's available on my website that has four exercises for how to improve your singing or speaking voice. You know, if you do these exercises and they help you sound better.

And one of the images in that video is breathing in Santa Claus, right? Taking a breath that expands the center of your body may feel like you're expanding your belly, you're letting your belly feel big.

Ideally, you want the whole center of your body, front, back, sides, all to feel bigger. But if it's easier to start with just one direction, start with Santa Claus.

So taking a moment to take three breaths into the center of your body that fill your pelvic bowl. And just noticing that feeling. Feeling your seat in your seat and a sense of spacious expansion in the lower part of your body.

Again, the more we bring attention, the more regularly we bring attention to our feet and our seat, the easier it will be to access those sensations, when we are under stress or learning to do something new.

And we need to access those sensations when we're under stress or learning to do something new, because it helps regulate our nervous system.

It calms our breath. It brings our attention out of the spinning, some would call monkey mind, out of the fight or flight panic, and back down to the ground, where we're safe, where we're held, where it's all okay.

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We're just a person here with all the other people and whatever we're about to do, it's gonna be fine.

So in this little addendum to last week's episode, “Help! I Have an Audition in Two Weeks!” – “Help! I Have an Audition in Two Minutes!” – my advice is feel your feet on the ground. Feel your feet on the floor, feel your seat in its seat, feel your bum in the chair, take three good breaths, expanding the center of your body and knowing that you're okay, it's going to be okay.

And as preparation for Getting Ready With Me, taking time every day, several times a day to bring attention to your feet and your seat will help you create a practice where that is a normal part of being you.

That awareness of yourself in space and that awareness of yourself as a spacious, accepting, safe person is part of who you normally are.

You might not feel that way all the time. That's not the goal. The goal is to be able to find that part of you whenever you need it. It's like opening an app on your phone. It's like never that, never far away, so that you can then do the next hard thing, which in this case is learning how to open your body, stretch the muscles, move the air, so that you can make beautiful sounds that the rest of us can enjoy.

Again, there are links in the show notes to the episodes I've mentioned and the opportunity to register for the class. I hope this has been helpful. Thank you so much for listening.

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